



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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February 18, 2024

Lent 1 / Communion Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

In times of struggle,

In times of wonder,

In times of anxious anticipation,

In this time and place, here and now, in all the days of our lives,

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

As we continue to journey towards the cross, let the light of this Christ candle remind us of who we are and whose we are: struggling, wondering, and anxiously anticipating people of the way.

The candle is lit.

Land Acknowledgement

We now take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land beside the water on which Birchcliff Bluffs United Church stands. This land is the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory and we seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

Opening Hymn

**Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights
(1, 2, 3, 4, 6)**

VU 108

1 Throughout these Lenten days and nights
we turn to walk the inward way,
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,
we live in hope till Easter Day.

2 The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,
who found in weakness greater power,
embraces us, though lost and flawed,
and leads us to his Rising Hour.

3 We bear the silence, cross and pain
of human burdens, human strife,
while sisters, brothers help sustain
our courage till the Feast of Life.

4 And though the road is hard and steep,
the Spirit ever calls us on
through Calvary's dying, dark and deep,
until we see the coming Dawn.

6 Rejoice, O sons and daughters! Sing
and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings
on Easter Day will rise again!

Call to Worship

Lent is an opportunity for a spiritual spring cleaning,

A chance to take and air out our experiences and thoughts,

A time to consider them, order them, and make decisions.

What have we learned? What is to be promoted or avoided?

As we prepare to move into a time of new joys and new uncertainties,

What can we use to rest firm in our faith?

Let us worship together, in part because it strengthens our resolve

To trust in God and live our lives in Christ.

Life and Work

“Square One”

Opening Prayer

God of the past, present and future, we come before you today, mindful of your covenant with us, of the promise you made to Noah and all living creatures, affirming our relationship.

As we plan our first tentative steps out of the shadow of the past, help us to honour our presence, renew our relationships, beware of the possibilities inherent in this new start, and watch confidently for your rainbow assurance of new life and new possibilities. Amen.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Psalm 25:1-10

1 In you, LORD my God, I put my trust

2 I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

3 No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame
but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.

4 Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.

5 Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

6 Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, LORD, are good.

8 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore GOD instructs sinners in his ways.

9 He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

10 All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of the covenant.

Mark 1:9-15

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Crashing Waters At Creation

VU 449

1 Crashing waters at creation,
ordered by the Spirit's breath,
first to witness day's beginning
from the brightness of night's death.

2 Parting water stood and trembled
as the captives passed on through,
washing off the chains of bondage -
channel to a life made new.

3 Cleansing water once at Jordan
closed around the one foretold,
opened to reveal the glory
ever new and ever old.

4 Living water, never ending,
quench the thirst and flood the soul.
Wellspring, Source of life eternal,
drench our dryness, make us whole.

Sermon **Cross Eyed: Focus**

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky

VU 509

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in deepest sin
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain,
I have wept for love of them;
they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame,
I will set a feast for them;
my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.

Offering

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit.

O Jesus, work in us that we might live holy lives, bearing fruit for your coming kingdom.

May we hold loosely to our wealth and our mortal lives upon this earth.

Through our offering this day, we seek to serve and follow you. May it be so, as we pray in your name. Amen.

Communion

God is with us!

We are not alone!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love,

**you are beyond complete knowledge,
above perfect description.**

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;

Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love,

**you are creative and self-giving,
generously moving.**

In all the near and distant corners of the universe.

nothing exists that does not find its source in you.

Even when we turn away from you, you are with us;

**your presence never fails us,
your gifts of hope and new life transform us.**

We praise you for Jesus Christ,
eternal as your love, our bond to one another.
We rejoice with all your people of every time and place,
and with angels and archangels,
to proclaim the glory of your name: It is Jesus, God incarnate, the Risen Christ,
who joins us together as a community of broken but hopeful believers:

**loving what he loved
living what he taught, and
striving to be his faithful servants
in our time and place.
In this meal we remember Jesus, his promises,
and the price he paid for who he was, what he said, and what he did.**

On the night before Jesus died,
he took a loaf of bread,
gave thanks, broke it, and said,
“Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me.”
After supper, Jesus took the cup, and poured, saying,
“This is the new covenant, remember me.”

**We do remember.
We remember his life of love, his friendship, his teaching, his dying, and his rising to life
again.
In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:**

Bless this bread and this cup,
the wheat and the grape,
the farmer and the harvest,
the seed and the sower.

So that in the sharing of these simple elements in community,
we may taste and see your goodness,
so that we might catch a glimpse of what it is to be in communion with you and with one
another.

**Through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and forever.**

Breaking the Bread, Pouring the Cup

We meet Christ as we share,
the bread of life.
the cup of blessing.
The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Prayers of the People

Dear God, we come before you today with the desire of our hearts. Our desires are many, some superficial, we want things to be our way ...

We mean well, Lord, and try to do things your way but sometimes our human side kicks in and we fall from the path of justice for all. Help us to empty ourselves to make more room for you in our lives. Let us be humble servants and find the path that leads to fullness of life ...

Moment of silence

**Gracious God, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever, Amen.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Go Make a Diff'rence

MV 209

Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

1 We are the salt of the earth,
called to let the people see
the love of God for you and me.

We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.
Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

2 We are the hands of Christ
reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.
We are the spirit of hope;
we are the voice of peace
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.
Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

3 So let your love shine on,
let it shine for all to see.
Go make a difference in the world.
And the spirit of Christ
will be with us as we go.
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.
Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

Commissioning and Benediction

Go from here renewed , restored and revitalized in your faith.

Let us meet the days ahead with transformed vigour and determination and the love of God planted deep in our hearts where it continues to grow.

Go with God's grace and make a difference, confident knowing you are not alone.
Amen.

Choral Benediction

May the God of Hope Go With Us

VU 424

May the God of hope go with us every day
Filling all our lives with hope and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace,
Singing, share our joy with all,
Working, for a world that's new,
Faithful, when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

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